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THE EVIDENCE AND DUTY OF BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE.

EXODUS, XXXII. 26.

*Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?*

WHEN this solemn question was asked, the camp of Israel was in a very awful situation. *Moses* had been in the Mount, conversing with God, and receiving the Law from His lips, forty days and forty nights. *And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the Mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* O what an amazing scene was here! That the very people who, a few weeks before, had witnessed the wonderful displays of Divine power on their behalf, in *Egypt*. and at the *Red-Sea*; and afterwards the still more terrific wonders of Mount *Sinai*, when *the thunderings, and lightnings, and voices and earthquake* made the whole camp to tremble, and even *Moses*, familiar as he was with God, *exceedingly to fear and quake*;—that this very people should so soon have forgotten all their signal deliverances, and all their solemn vows, and begged to be placed under the guidance of a dumb idol,—presents an example of infatuation and depravity as enormous as it was degrading. But so it was. The request was made. And, still more astonishing to tell! *Aaron* complied with it. Under his direction, the people, in their idolatrous phrenzy, made a Golden Calf, and fell down before it, and

worshipped it, and cried out, *These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*

When *Moses* was informed of this besotted folly and wickedness on the part of the people, he immediately *turned and went down from the Mount*, and *Joshua* with him; and after remonstrating with *Aaron* and with the people on account of their sin, *he took the Calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.* Having done this,—for the purpose of making a solemn discrimination between the innocent and the guilty, and of preparing to execute the judgment of God against the latter,—he came forth and *stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?*

The spirit of this question, my friends, is just as applicable to us, as it was to the people of *Israel* three and thirty centuries ago. Suppose the Saviour were now to come, in his glorified body, into this assembly, and, standing visibly in the midst of us, were to ask—*Who is on the Lord's side?* what answer would each of us give Him? What answer would candour *compel* us to give? Well, that Divine and Omniscient Redeemer *is* present with us, though our bodily eyes see Him not; and he *does* ask each of us, in his Word, and in his Providence, this solemn question. Let me, then, beseech every one to answer it to his own conscience as in the presence of Him *who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.* And that you may be enabled to answer it with the more intelligence and certainty, I shall endeavour, *First*, to DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO ARE ON THE LORD'S SIDE; and *Secondly*, to ASSIGN SOME REASONS WHY WE ARE ALL BOUND TO BE ON THAT SIDE. In other words, I propose to speak of the EVIDENCE and the DUTY of being on the *Lord's side.*

I. The first question to be considered is, What is implied in being on the *Lord's side?* What is the character of those of whom this may be said?

Now, this question evidently presupposes that there *is* a SIDE which may be emphatically called the *Lord's side.* And can any thinking man contemplate our world, or look into the Bible, without seeing and feeling that this is really the case? There is a controversy between God and rebellious man. God is on the side of truth, order, and holiness. The rebels are on the side of folly, disorder, and sin. They have risen up, without the least cause, in opposition to the rightful Sovereign of the universe; and their hostility to him is implacable. They dislike his character, his truth, his precepts, his government, although all are infinitely perfect. This warfare, so unreasonable and atrocious on man's part, has been raging for near six thousand years, and is still kept up with unabated enmity. The object of Jehovah is

most wise and benevolent. It is to maintain untarnished the glory of his perfections, the honour of his law, and the authority of his most perfect and blessed government; and to make such a display of all these to his intelligent and moral kingdom, as shall ultimately promote the greatest happiness of that kingdom. By *the Lord's side*, therefore, is obviously meant, the side of wisdom, of holiness, and of true enjoyment; the side which our blessed Saviour came down from heaven, and made himself an atoning sacrifice to promote and maintain; the side, of course, which all good beings, on earth and in heaven, espouse and love; and which nothing but infatuation and wickedness ever prompted any creature to oppose.

The question before us further presupposes, that there are those who are *not on the Lord's side*. The very terms of it, as asked by *Moses*, plainly imported that the men of that generation were not *all* on the right side. Far from it. They were greatly divided. We know not what proportion, but a large number, were in the ranks of rebellion. So it was then; so it has ever been, since the time of *Cain* and *Abel*; and so it is now. The great mass of mankind are in arms against the righteous Governour of the universe. This is the case, indeed, by nature, with *ALL*. But some, blessed be the riches of Jehovah's grace, have laid down the weapons of their hostility, have left the camp of the rebels, and come in, and accepted the offers of reconciliation. Now, to one or the other of these parties all mankind belong. Yes, my brethren, those who have penitently returned and submitted, and those who still stand out in their rebellion—God and mammon—divide the population of our globe between them. We cannot say of any individual of our race that he belongs to neither of these parties. Our blessed Saviour has unquestionably decided this point, when he pronounces, with solemn emphasis, *He that is not for me, is against me*. Let none, then, flatter themselves that, although they have no positive evidence that they are *on the Lord's side*, they may yet take comfort in the hope that they are not on the side of the enemy. This is a miserable delusion. There can be no neutrality here. If you are not *on the Lord's side*, you are on the *side* of his arch-adversary; and, remaining such, must be treated accordingly.

Once more; the question before us presupposes, that it is of the utmost importance that the point which it presses, be decided. *Moses*, undoubtedly, believed that interests of unspeakable consequence were involved in the solemn interrogatory, *then*; and are interests of less consequence, think you, involved in it *at present*? Can any rational being doubt that the solution of the question, whether we are the friends or the enemies of God, is of infinite moment? Oh, no. If ever a question embraced *OUR ALL*, this is that question. Nay, it not only ought to be de-



cided, but it ought to be decided *now*; without the delay of another hour; before we take one more step in the journey of life. Eternal interests are at stake, which must remain in the deepest uncertainty and jeopardy, so long as this point is undetermined. Rational and accountable creature! hastening to the judgment-seat of Christ,—let me beseech you to apply yourself without sophistry, and without evasion to this all important inquiry.

The question then recurs—What is implied in being *on the Lord's side*? I answer,

1. They alone are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS TRUTH; who believe and embrace the fundamental *doctrines* of his Word. It can, by no means, my friends—whatever some may insinuate to the contrary—it can by no means be considered a matter of small moment, what your doctrinal belief on the great subject of religion may be. If all holy practice be founded on holy principle; if the incorruptible seed of all holy principle be truth; if men, as our blessed Lord expressly declares, are *sanctified by the truth*; if those who receive or teach *another gospel*, that is, a gospel essentially different from that which is contained in the Bible, are to be held “*accursed*,” as the inspired apostle pronounces; in a word, if there be “*heresies*” which are “*damnable*,” as another apostle expressly declares;—then we are demonstrably led to the conclusion—that to be *on the Lord's side*, is to be on the side of his fundamental truth; and that those who reject this, cannot be the cordial friends of him who is the Author and Teacher of truth.

We are by no means, indeed, to suppose, that *every degree* of doctrinal error is an evidence of enmity to God. If this were the case, probably no man living would be found *on the Lord's side*; because no man, it is probable, is absolutely perfect in his *creed*, any more than in his *practice*. Yet, on the other hand, there are limits beyond which doctrinal error is manifestly incompatible with genuine piety. How *much* error a man must embrace before it becomes evident that he is not a Christian, is not for a fallible mortal to decide. Yet when we have ascertained what the *fundamental*, the absolutely *essential* doctrines of the Gospel are—and to ascertain these, will not be very difficult to those who have the Bible in their hands—we are, of course, perfectly warranted in pronouncing, that those who reject them, are not *on the Lord's side*. They reject that without which no man can be said to receive the Gospel, and, consequently, without which no man is a Christian.

2. They only are *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS CHARACTER; who love him supremely, on account of his infinite excellence, and who rejoice in all his adorable perfections.

All will allow, without hesitation, that those Israelites who turned away from the true God, and gave their worship to a miserable idol, were not on the side of Jehovah. So *Moses*, under Divine guidance, decided concerning all such persons; and therefore, inflicted upon them a penalty as ignominious as it was terrible. But there are many other idols besides those of gold and silver, stone and wood. An idol is any thing which usurps the place of God in the hearts of his rational creatures. Accordingly the inspired Apostle expressly declares that *covetousness is idolatry*. And so is inordinate love to any created object. That individual, then, whoever he may be; however externally fair and blameless his deportment; however confident his profession; who places his highest affections on any thing in this world; whether it be wealth; or honours; or relatives; or pleasures; or splendid living,—makes it as perfectly manifest that he is not a friend of God, as if he bowed down, every day of his life, to a graven image. *Whosoever*, says an inspired Apostle, *will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*. *Ye cannot*, says the Saviour, *serve God and mammon*. And again, *He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, brethren or sisters, more than me, is not worthy of me: he cannot be my disciple*.

He, then, who is *on the Lord's side*, not only loves God with supreme affection; but he loves him, primarily, on account of his own infinite and eternal excellence. He cherishes a cordial complacency in all the Divine attributes. He is reconciled to them all, approves them all, takes pleasure in the contemplation of them all. If he could accomplish it by a wish, he would have no perfection of his Maker either laid aside or altered. He rejoices unfeignedly in the unspotted holiness, the inflexible justice, and the terrible majesty of God, as well as in his goodness, mercy, and grace. In other words, he rejoices in the real, scriptural, and complete character of God. He sees a glory in all that Jehovah is, as well as in all that he does, which inspires delight, confidence and joy. His heart goes forth, too, in habitual gratitude to God, for all the bounty of his Providence, and for all the riches of his grace. He feels himself a debtor to both, beyond the power of language to express. So that he is able, from the heart, to say with the holy Psalmist, *Lord, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee*. But further—

3. They only are *on the Lord's side*, who are *ON THE SIDE OF HIS GOSPEL*; who have sincerely fallen in with the plan of reconciliation which he has revealed; have come forth from the camp of the enemy, and been *joined to the Lord in one Spirit*. What would you say to a number of individuals, in an army of traitors, who should believe and allege that they were friendly to their government, while they remained associated with its enemies, and co-operated with them in its



plans and measures? Would you not indignantly reject their claim? Would you not say to them—‘Come forth from the camp of the rebels; accept of the pardon offered you; and show yourselves loyal citizens, and we will believe you.’ So it is with those who are by nature enemies of God. Until they cordially repent of their enmity, and lay down their arms, and accept of the offered terms of reconciliation, and come forth from the ranks of rebellion, and practically manifest their friendship, they must, undoubtedly, be considered as enemies still. Let no one, then, imagine that he is *on the Lord’s side*, who is not a friend to the blessed Redeemer; who has not humbly and penitently accepted of him, as the foundation of his hope, and the life of his soul; who has not cordially embraced his humbling and self-denying terms of mercy. Hence, *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*, are represented in Scripture as the very first steps in Gospel obedience. And the benign proclamation of that Gospel is, *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

This acceptance of the Saviour, as was intimated, is always connected with *coming out from the camp of the enemy*, and *showing, by our spirit and pursuits, that we belong to Christ*. To be *on the Lord’s side*, does not, indeed, imply withdrawing from society, and indulging in the moroseness and gloom of monastick seclusion. The religion of Jesus Christ is a social, benevolent religion. It requires those who profess to obey it, to *shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*; and to endeavour, by an amiable, pure and heavenly conversation, to win all around them to the service of their Master. When, therefore, they are exhorted and profess to *come out from the world*, the meaning is, that they are no longer *conformed to the world*; that they have separated themselves from the maxims, the follies, and the criminal habits of the world; that they have *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather*, by their conduct, habitually *reprove them*; that they withdraw, not only from every form of open corruption, but also from many of the more decent forms of recreation and social indulgence, which the world allow, and pronounce innocent; but which all experience shows to be unfriendly to a life of communion with God. They *confess Christ before men*, not merely by going, at stated seasons, to a sacramental table, but also by daily manifesting the power of his religion in their spirit and conversation. In short, they live, in some measure, as those who are habitually *seeking a better country, that is an heavenly*; whose treasure is in heaven, whose hearts are there also, and who are daily ascending thither in holy contemplation and spiritual desires. Believe it, my friends, if you would really be *on the*

*Lord's side*, you must decisively take your stand, practically, as well as in words, with those who are represented as a *chosen generation, a peculiar people*. Hence, the solemn address of heaven's King is—*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

4. Again; they alone can justly be said to be *on the Lord's side*, who are ON THE SIDE OF HIS LAW; who delight in his will, rejoice in his government, and strive to obey him in all things.

This is what the inspired Apostle emphatically calls, *loving not in word only, but in deed and in truth*. And, accordingly, the Saviour himself declares, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*. And again, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*. And, in accordance with the Saviour's words, John, the beloved disciple, with awful solemnity pronounces—*He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*. Holy obedience, my friends, enters, essentially into the character of the Christian. Our blessed Saviour did *not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*. He did not come to purchase for his followers a license to sin; but to purchase for them a deliverance from the dominion, as well as the guilt of sin. Hence, the genuine, scriptural evidence that you are *on the Lord's side*, is exactly proportioned to the evidence of your SANCTIFICATION. Accordingly, the followers of Christ are represented in scripture as *saints*, that is, *sanctified ones*; they are said to be *chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love*. Nay, the real friend of Christ, not only *aims and endeavours* to obey him, but he also *loves* to obey him. He *delights in his law after the inward man*. It is *his meat and drink* to obey the will of his beloved Saviour. His obedience is not merely external, but real and cordial; not partial, but universal; not temporary, merely, but persevering. No mere man, indeed, in this life, ever did, or ever will perfectly obey the divine law. *If any man say that he has no sin, he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him*. But he of whom we speak *desires* perfection, *breathes* after perfection, and is daily *humbled and grieved* that he falls short of it. Whatever God has appointed or commanded, he who is *on the Lord's side*, so far as he is acquainted with it, is disposed to respect and honour. The sabbath of the Lord, he feels bound to venerate and to sanctify. The sanctuary, and all its ordinances he loves, and delights to attend. He regards prayer as a privilege as well as a duty. In short, whatever imperfection may actually attend his obedience—and this imperfection is acknowledged by none more readily, and lamented

by none more deeply, than by himself; he does not allow himself to neglect or slight any thing that God has ordained; but desires and strives to *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

5. Lastly; they alone are *on the Lord's side*, who are **ON THE SIDE OF HIS HONOUR**; who habitually and supremely seek his glory. As Jehovah made all things for his own glory; as this is the ultimate end which he himself has in view in all his dispensations both of Providence and of grace; so he commands all his creatures to make it *their* highest object. And all the children of his grace, in some good measure, do this. They heartily espouse the cause of God, and take a deep and tender interest in it as their own. Their aim, and in some degree their attainment, is to hold all other interests in subordination to this. They do not, indeed, neglect their worldly affairs. Nay, commonly, they are more diligent, systematick, and orderly in their temporal business, than most others. But still *they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The spread of the Gospel; the revival of religion; the prosperity of Zion; the salvation of souls; the honour of the Redeemer—these are the objects which above all others they esteem and seek. They are grieved when the Saviour is dishonoured. They mourn, from the heart, over all the error, the profaneness, and the profligacy which they witness around them. And while they turn away with abhorrence from every thing, either in principle or in practice dishonouring to God; it is their meat and drink to exalt the name of God; to honour his institutions; to benefit his people; to extend the knowledge of his religion; to instruct the ignorant; to reclaim the vicious; to assist in sending the Gospel to the dark places of the earth; and, in a word, over all the lurking places of ignorance, and sin, and misery, to assist in shedding the rays of knowledge, faith, love, joy, and happiness. These are the favourite objects of all who are *on the Lord's side*. For these they labour, and plan, and contribute, and pray. And into the blessed scale of these interests, they delight to cast the whole weight of their desires, their exertions, and their example from day to day.

Such are they who are *on the Lord's side*. Here, then, my friends, before we proceed to the second head of discourse, which will be reserved for another opportunity,—let us make a solemn pause, and inquire, whether *we* have *any part or lot* in the character which has been described. You will perceive that, in delineating this character, I have not dwelt on the peculiarities of *any* particular denomination of christians; but upon those great principles of our common christianity, which all the friends of evangelical truth concur in maintaining. How stands this great concern, then, my beloved hearers, with regard to each of *you*? Are you *on the Lord's side*, or are you leagued with his enemies? The testimony by which this question is to be decided, is not



remote or obscure ; but plain, simple, and at hand. Let me beseech you to review with impartiality the marks of friendship to God which have been laid down. Do you take the part of Jehovah's truth against hereticks, and hold fast the fundamental doctrines of his Word ? Do you supremely love his character and service, preferring them above those of any other master ? Do you *delight in his law after the inward man*, and unfeignedly mourn over all your known departures from it ? Have you, with penitence and faith, renounced your rebellion, come forth from its ranks, and submitted to the Saviour, as the *Lord your righteousness, and the Lord your strength* ? Is sin your grief and burden, and is it your habitual, governing desire to be delivered from its pollution, as well as its guilt, and to obey the will of Christ in all things ? Is the honour of the Redeemer dear to your hearts, and the extension and glory of his kingdom *preferred above your chief joy* ? If you can, in the fear of God, answer these questions in the affirmative, you are *on the Lord's side* ; and have a right to the privileges and comforts of this relation. But if not, you are still aliens and enemies. Fellow mortals ! can you conceive of an inquiry more momentous than this ? Can you consent that it should remain for one hour undecided ? Or, if compelled, in candour, to decide it *against yourselves*,—can you remain a moment at ease ? Remember that there is a solemn trial just before you. You may turn away from this inquiry *now* ; but you cannot evade it long. And, Oh, when the decision comes, where will you then be ? On the right hand, or on the left ? Great Searcher of hearts ! thou knowest ! *O search us, and try us, and lead us in the way everlasting !*

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## SERMON IX.

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Exodus, xxxii. 26.—*Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side ?*

HAVING endeavoured, with the utmost plainness, to show what is implied in being *on the Lord's side*, I come now,

II. TO OFFER SOME REASONS WHY WE OUGHT, ALL OF US, TO BE ON THE LORD'S SIDE.

But can it be necessary to *reason* on such a subject ? Yes, my friends, it is necessary. Impenitent men are so infatuated, so completely beside themselves, in a spiritual sense, that they need all the entreaty and expostulation which we can employ for their benefit. Ac-

cordingly, Jehovah himself condescends to *reason* with his rebellious creatures, and to *beseech* them to be reconciled to him. *Come now*, saith He, by the Prophet, *and let us REASON together.*

1. The first reason which I shall offer why we ought all to be *on the Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE SIDE OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is, emphatically, THE RIGHT SIDE. In espousing the side of any individual or party, in a worldly controversy, we are always in some danger of being betrayed into error, or, at least, into excess. For, as no man is perfect, so almost every cause or party to which we can attach ourselves in the present life, has some mixture of imperfection, which a wise man sees and regrets, and which he dares not, as a conscientious man, advocate throughout. But in the case before us, we are in no such danger. The cause of God is infinitely wise and righteous, without the possibility of mistake or injustice. In the great controversy existing between Him and rebellious man, God is wholly in the right, and man altogether in the wrong. God is a holy, wise and equitable Sovereign : while man is an unreasonable, perverse, and infatuated rebel. God requires nothing of the rebel, but that which he ought, upon every principle, immediately to perform. While the disobedient creature, himself being judge, is constantly pursuing a course as irrational as it is criminal. It is evident, then, that all who take the side of God in this controversy, take the right side ; the side which is holy, and just, and good, in an infinite degree. I appeal to you, then, my friends, whether we are not all solemnly bound to be on this side ? Is not being on this side the most reasonable, and in every respect the most worthy of our rational nature ? Is it not the side of all that is excellent, and blessed, and benevolent, and heavenly, against all that is criminal, and degrading, and destructive in the creation of God ?

2. Again ; as another reason why you ought to be *on the Lord's side*, let me beseech you to consider seriously ON WHAT SIDE YOU ARE, IF YOU ARE NOT ON HIS. If you are not on the side of God, you are on the opposite, hostile side. It is impossible, as was before said, to stand neuter in this controversy. You *must*—you assuredly *do* side with the one or the other ; the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of darkness ; God or mammon ; Christ or Belial. There is no other alternative. If you only *decline* to take the Lord's side, that is enough to condemn you. That itself is *taking side against him*. Only “forget” Him, and his word declares that you will be regarded and treated as traitors against his government. It is painful to say it ; but as long as you do not heartily take *the Lord's side*, it is a solemn truth, that you are “in league with death, and in covenant with hell.” You are “enlisted under the banner of the prince of darkness, and acting in concert with the devil and his angels.” My dear hearers, who yet re-

main aliens from *the covenant of promise*, can you think of this, and not tremble? Can you recollect without horror, that, as long as you remain in this situation, whether you go out, or come in; whether you sit down or rise up; wherever you go, or whatever you do, you are joining with the enemies of the God that made you; are taking the side of rebellion against that government which is the only hope of the intelligent creation? Creature of God! dying, yet immortal! I ask again, canst thou think of this without deep alarm? Canst thou think of standing in direct hostility with infinite Wisdom, infinite Power, and infinite Benevolence? Art thou willing to be found in league with all that is evil, and at war with all that is good in the universe? If God be against thee, who can be for thee? *Canst thou contend with Him? Canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? Woe to him that striveth with his Maker!*

3. Consider further, as another reason why you ought to be *on the Lord's side*, HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU. Consider how often he has been your Helper, your Protector, and your Benefactor, how often he has appeared for your deliverance, and how rich have been the bounties of his Providence. To this heavenly Sovereign are every one of you indebted for your existence; for all your faculties; for the distinguished rank which you hold in the scale of being. To Him are you indebted for every breath you draw, for every moment you live, for every comfort you have ever enjoyed, for every valuable acquirement you have made, for every hope you are permitted to cherish. To Him are you indebted, above all, for the gift of a Saviour; for the gracious offer of peace, and pardon, and sanctification, and eternal life and glory by his atoning sacrifice; for the gift of the Holy Spirit to strive with you; and for all your precious privileges, temporal and spiritual. And will you hesitate—can you doubt, whether to be on the side of this Benefactor or not? Can you consent to remain another hour in hostility against your Maker, your Protector, the bountiful Author of all your mercies? Forbid it gratitude! Forbid it every rational generous principle of our nature!

4. A fourth reason, why we ought all to be *on the Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE SIDE OF HAPPINESS; the only side which can effectually secure our real enjoyment. I am aware that multitudes make a very different estimate of this matter. They think piety one of the greatest foes to personal enjoyment; and, therefore, they deliberately postpone all serious attention to the subject, to some future period—perhaps to old age, that they may, in the mean time, enjoy life. Just as reasonably might a man, labouring under a loathsome and painful disease, decline or postpone being healed, lest recovering his health might interfere with his comfort. O the amazing, the almost incredible in-

fatuation of men! Never did creatures calling themselves rational, yield to a more degrading and miserable delusion! The fact is directly the reverse of what an impenitent and unbelieving world suppose. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. The way of transgressors is hard. But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.* Reconciliation and friendship with God, really form the basis of all rational and true enjoyment. The graces and duties of the christian life, are not only consistent with happiness, but will be found, when examined, to form **THE VERY ESSENCE OF IT.** What are faith, and hope, and love, and joy, and trust in God, and resignation, and contentment, and all *the fruits of the Spirit*—but another name for the truest felicity of which man is capable here below? Yes, brethren, just in proportion as we *walk with God*, we bring down heaven into our souls. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The way of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. Happy the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!*

5. Further; let me entreat those who are not yet *on the Lord's side*, to consider that **THEY HAVE NOT ONE REASONABLE PLEA FOR BEING ON THE SIDE OF SATAN.** I know, indeed, that the children of this world frequently offer excuses for the course they take, which may appear to them plausible, and in which they intrench themselves with great apparent confidence. But they are all delusive; most of them impious insults to the God of heaven; and such as they would be ashamed of offering in reference to their temporal affairs. Do you say, my impenitent hearer, that you are *unable* to quit the side of sin and Satan, and to join that of the Lord? There never was a more deceitful or hollow-hearted plea. You labour under no other inability in this case, than that which arises from your depravity, your criminal disaffection to your rightful Sovereign. It is just as if a thief, or a murderer, arrayed before a human tribunal, should plead as an apology for his crime, that his love of the wicked act was so deeply inwrought and fixed in his nature, that he could not but indulge it, and must, therefore, be excused! How would a righteous judge treat such a shameless plea? Again; do you say, that the service of God is oppressive, or injurious to your interest? Never was there a more groundless cavil. He never was a hard Master. He requires nothing of us but what is as much adapted to promote our welfare as his own glory. All scripture and all experience demonstrate, that *his commandments are not grievous*; and that *his service*, instead of slavery, *is perfect freedom*,—the noblest freedom. Do you plead, that the provisions of the Gospel are not ex-

tensive and rich enough to reach your case? This objection is no less false than the foregoing. The blessed Redeemer is both able and willing to *save to the uttermost*, all that come to God through Him. To whatever embarrassments our philosophical speculations concerning the extent of the atonement may give rise, the plain language of Him who shed his blood for sinners, is, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH, for I am God, and beside me there is none else.* And again, *Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: for whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* And again, *WHOSOEVER WILL, let him come, and take of the water of life freely.* Do you allege that you have not time to attend to this great subject? Just as well might you allege a want of time to take the aliment necessary for sustaining your nature. Without the latter, indeed, your natural lives cannot be supported; but without the former better had you never been born; for your spirits must die eternally. O, for what was time given you? Can it be devoted to any object comparable to that of preparing for endless blessedness? Seeing, then, that you are *altogether without excuse*; seeing you have no reasonable plea for declining, or delaying to join the Lord's side, let me beseech you now to accept of his gracious invitation. *To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* Why should you attempt apologies now, when you know that in the great day of trial, you will be speechless?

6. The last reason which I shall urge, why we ought all to be on the *Lord's side*, is, that IT IS THE ONLY SAFE SIDE; THE ONLY SIDE THAT WILL FINALLY AND ASSUREDLY TRIUMPH. *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion shall endure throughout all generations. He must reign until He shall have put all enemies under his feet.* Yes, my friends, the cause of God is the only one that shall live, and grow, and flourish, when all others have sunk under the arm of his Omnipotence. Every thing that is on the side of God, will last, will triumph, will eternally prosper: the perfections of his character, and the stability of his covenant, are pledged for this result. But inevitable downfall and destruction await every person, and every interest belonging to the side of his enemies. *Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. For the Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

Our subject suggests a variety of practical reflections, to some of which we now request your serious attention. And,



1. We are led by the foregoing remarks to reflect, *How obvious and how strong the obligations on all to make a profession of religion!* By making a profession of religion, we mean, appearing and acting publicly *on the Lord's side*. It is, more particularly, attending with solemnity on those Sacramental Seals which Christ has instituted to mark the line between those who are within, and those who are without the visible Church. The duty of making this profession is obvious. If we are bound to *BE on the Lord's side*, we are surely bound to *APPEAR* on that side—to be *SEEN* to be there. Thus the same authority which requires us to believe in Christ, and to love Christ, has commanded us to *confess him before men*; and to let *our light*, as his followers, *shine before men*. Nay, he distinctly gives us to understand, that declining, or neglecting to *confess him before men*, is equivalent to *denying him*; and such he declares, *He will deny before his Father, and before the holy angels*. Nor let any imagine that this obligation to *confess Christ*, is not binding on *them*. Thousands appear to fall into this mistake. They say, and say truly, that to *confess the Saviour*, by making a public profession, while they have no faith in him, no love to him, would be to commit sin: but they appear to have no serious impression whatever, of the dreadful sin of *NOT* confessing Christ; in other words, of *DENYING HIM* before men. You are afraid, you say, of the sin of a hypocritical profession; but you are not afraid, it seems, of *turning your backs* upon the Lord of life and glory! O ye who are at ease in the commission of this sin, how great is your guilt! Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

2. *How solemn a transaction is making a profession of religion!* We are under the most solemn obligations, as you have heard, to make a profession—obligations which we can neither renounce nor disregard with impunity. To refuse to do it is to *deny the Saviour*. And yet, we are not at liberty to do it with rashness, with levity, or with an impenitent and unbelieving spirit. O how much does such a profession import! It implies coming forth from the camp of the enemy, and declaring ourselves *on the Lord's side*. It implies *joining ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten*. It is a deliberate, public enlisting under the banner of the Captain of salvation; taking, as it were, a solemn oath to be His, in soul and body, for time and eternity. Surely a transaction so serious, so momentous, so irrevocable; a transaction connected with so many important consequences to ourselves and others, is not a mere ceremonial, and ought not to be regarded or treated as such. It ought to be entered upon with intelligence, with solemn deliberation, with the sacred decision of one who remembers that he is *acting for eternity*, and that, after *putting his hand to the plough*, he can *never look back*.

3. *How deplorable the situation of those who are not on the Lord's side!* O that I could give to such persons if it were but one glance of their guilt and danger, as they really are! You are engaged, my friends, in a warfare with Omnipotence. Can you hope to prevail against Him? This is a hope which insanity itself cannot cherish. No; this hostility can end only in one of two ways. Either by your repenting, and abandoning the contest; or by your utter defeat and destruction. Which alternative will you prefer? Will you stand out, defy Jehovah, and brave the heaviest inflictions of his wrath? Surely you cannot deliberately resolve to take so infatuated a course. *Why will you die*, when life is so freely and mercifully offered you? The great Sovereign, against whom you have so unreasonably risen up in arms, is willing to be reconciled. He invites, he beseeches you to come in, and accept of a free pardon. Will you submit and live? You must be at peace with Him, or perish. If you ever intend to make peace with Him, for what are you waiting? Are you expecting *more easy terms* of reconciliation hereafter? Alas! my friends, Jehovah must change before you can be taken to heaven while you continue in love with sin, and enemies of his glorious character. Besides, what can be more condescending and gracious than the terms now offered you? You are not called upon to bring a price in your hands. Only lay down your arms, be sorry for what you have done, and become reconciled to the character, the government, and the Gospel of God; and all that is past will be pardoned, and remembered against you no more. Are you waiting for a *more convenient season*, to be reconciled? I ask, will continuing longer in your rebellion render it easier for you hereafter to repent and reform? As reasonably might a sick man say to one who offered at once to heal him—"Let me become a little worse; let my disease take a little firmer hold, and my weakness become a little greater, before you apply the remedy." But, ah, you act not thus in reference to the health of your bodies: it is only in regard to the interests of your immortal souls that you yield to such unspeakable infatuation. Do you ask, what you shall do? I answer, *Repent, and believe the Gospel*. Take not another step in your present unhallowed course. **THIS HOUR** lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and be reconciled to Him who alone can avail you as a Friend. I say, **THIS HOUR**, for you know not that you have another to live. *Now, then, in the day of your merciful visitation*, while the door is open, and the voice of mercy is heard in kindest accents,—enter without delay the sanctuary of salvation, which the Saviour has purchased and prepared by his most precious blood; and you will find peace—eternal peace: but turn away from it, and all will be dark, and miserable, and accursed for ever!

4. Finally ; *How important is it that those who profess to be on the Lord's side, exhibit a life and conversation corresponding with their profession.* What would you think, my brethren, if an army raised by the government of your country, and an army formed by a band of traitors, were encamped in the neighbourhood of each other, and you should see many individuals of the former, while they held their heads high in professions of loyalty, frequently visiting the tented field of the rebels, skulking among their ranks, and, in short, by bowing, smiling, and every indication of cordial familiarity, making it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to ascertain to which army they belonged ? would you not consider their fidelity extremely suspicious ? Need I say, brethren, that there is an awful amount of this equivocal friendship in the visible church ? O how many who profess to be *on the Lord's side*, render it most distressingly doubtful, by their daily conformity to the world, whether they really belong to Christ or Belial ! Hence it is, that so many who claim to be disciples, go halting and comfortless in their christian profession ; oppressed with doubts concerning their own state ; strangers to the joyful assurance of hope ; and operating as clogs and a burden, rather than helpers to the church. Surely it is time for such to arouse themselves, and to examine with more solicitude than ever **ON WHAT SIDE THEY REALLY STAND.** O ye who have "subscribed with your hands unto the Lord, and have surnamed yourselves by the name of Israel," remember that the real children of God are a *peculiar people* : peculiar in their experience, their taste, their joys, their habits, and their pursuits. If you wish to have satisfying evidence that you are of their number, enter, with holy decision, into their scriptural peculiarities. If you wish to enjoy peace yourselves, to edify others, or to honour your Leader, be decided : *Follow the Lord fully.* Let your every word and action speak on what side you are : not by noisy profession ; not by sanctimonious austerity ; not by saying, in every company, *Stand by, for I am holier than thou* ; but by humility, by benevolence, by purity, by self-denial, by a holy elevation of sentiment and affection, by an unaffected taste and zeal for spiritual things, by shunning the very appearance of evil ; by abounding in those works of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. And for your encouragement remember that precious word of promise, from the Captain of salvation, which belongs to every faithful believer—**HE THAT CONFESSETH ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I ALSO CONFESS BEFORE MY FATHER AND THE HOLY ANGELS. TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH, WILL I GRANT TO SIT WITH ME ON MY THRONE, EVEN AS I ALSO OVERCAME, AND AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER ON HIS THRONE.—Amen.**